

Indiana State Department of Health
Health Care Regulatory Services Commission
Division of Consumer Protection
Commercial Sewage Disposal Program

Program Overview

Commercial Onsite Sewage Disposal Program staff review and approve plans and specifications for onsite sewage disposal systems (i.e., septic systems) serving any type of commercial facility. An onsite sewage disposal system is one that treats only domestic sewage onsite, with final disposal via absorption into the soil. Examples of facilities typically served are apartments, subdivisions, mobile home communities, churches, schools, factories, gas stations, groceries, convenience stores, post offices, restaurants, taverns, golf course clubhouses, campgrounds, and veterinary, dental, and medical offices. If a sanitary sewer is available within a reasonable distance to the proposed facility, installation of an onsite sewage disposal systems is prohibited, and a connection must be made to the sewer. Sewage disposal systems that discharge to a stream or other surface water body are regulated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Likewise, disposal of petrochemicals and other industrial wastes (in whole or in part) is regulated by IDEM.

Drafting of plans is not the first step, however. Before plans can be developed, a soil report for the proposed site must be prepared by an Registered Soil Scientist and submitted to Plan Review Section, in duplicate. The extra copy of the soil report is forwarded to the local health department to solicit input about the project site. The report must specify in detail the kinds of soil encountered at the proposed site, and should include information about facility operation sufficient for us to estimate the design maximum daily sewage flow that must be treated. Once the necessary information is received, staff will work with the designated engineer or architect to determine the best type of onsite sewage disposal system for those soils; where the system should be constructed and how it should be positioned; establish drainage requirements and minimum system size; and outline other design requirements important to proper functioning of the sewage disposal system. Once the architect or engineer submits plans and specifications they are reviewed for compliance with the design requirements that were agreed upon and state standards. State law requires that sewage disposal plans and specifications be stamped by an engineer or architect registered to practice in Indiana. Registered land surveyors are prohibited from preparing sewage disposal system plans, although it is legal for them to design gravity storm and sanitary sewers. Final permitting for some commercial onsite sewage disposal systems may be referred to a local health department if it is determined that they have staff capable of handling those types of projects. Most local health departments are approved to handle conventional (gravity) systems. A smaller number of local health departments are approved to handle more

complex systems, but in all cases we limit referrals to those projects that are designed to handle 750 gallons per day or less of sewage.